

## Chapter 17: Drugs

Whether drugs lead to illumination or degradation depends on the spirit in which one takes them.

George Andrews, *Drugs and Magic* (1997)

Why is there so much controversy about drug testing? I know plenty of guys who would be willing to test any drug they could come up with.

George Carlin<sup>1</sup>

I will lift up mine eyes unto the pills.

Malcolm Muggeridge<sup>2</sup>

### **A. Sugar**

Looking back, I see that I was a junkie from an early age, my first drug being sugar. All kids love sugar, but I loved it to excess. I drank syrup from the jar. I added sugar to milk. I put maple syrup on corn flakes. I drank glycerine when I could find it – glycerine from the drug store, so sweet it doesn't even taste good. "One spoon or two?" people would ask me, and I would say eight, and not be kidding.

I don't recall actually getting a rush from sugar, although I must have been pretty high on it as a child. But I loved it because it tasted so good. Now that I'm 65 and a diabetic and have mostly eliminated sugar from my diet, I feel the lack acutely, daily, and crave it mightily. I love the stuff. I could still eat half a dozen candy bars at a sitting, or fill a coffee cup with granulated sugar and crunch it down.



Drinking fresh orange juice is not all that different from drinking sugar, except you don't have to chew it. Other people like wine or margaritas – what I like is to put two holes in a can of sweetened condensed milk and sip from it until it's gone – or almost gone – and scoop the rest out with a spoon. Smoking cannabis only made sugar seem more

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<sup>1</sup> American comedian and monologist (1937-2008). Researchers of the future: if you want to understand America in my day, find on some dusty library shelf recordings or even transcripts of his monologues. You will learn more from them than from most books about the time.

<sup>2</sup> British journalist and author (1903-1990). Quoted in *The New Statesman*, "London Diary," August 3, 1962.

appealing. Maybe liquor would have been better for me, or maybe not. But sugar is my sweetie pie.

- I remember being dosed with Coca-Cola syrup as a remedy, when I was ill as a child. I liked Coca-Cola and loved sugar and syrup in almost every form, but not this one.

## B. Tobacco

Sugar was my first drug, but it is not all that interesting to write about. My next drug, though, was tobacco – specifically cigarettes, although I used tobacco in other forms also. There were several things that made smoking attractive to me at the age of 12. First, of course, it was cool. It is hard to remember now, after decades of polemical anti-smoking



propaganda, the coolness of smoking. It was just *cool* – smoke curling up, the “French inhale” from mouth to nostrils, the glowing coal of a cigarette in the dark. All the cultural influences the anti-smoking people complained about were powerfully active in 1956 – Humphrey Bogart



(left) and Frank Sinatra (right), and Philip Marlowe and even the memory of daring flappers (I read about these in my father’s books of old cartoons – see Chapter 4.B).<sup>3</sup> And no Surgeon General, either – his famous report on smoking and cancer would not be issued for eight more years. In 1956 cigarette ads still showed doctors in white coats recommending one brand over another. Smoke Old Golds – not a cough in a carload!

Second, smoking was grown-up. As will be obvious to readers of Chapter 7, that was an irresistible lure, because to be grown up meant to be released from parental domination – to be, as I imagined then, *free*. So the very symbolism of coolness was *extra-cool* for me – it was a symbol of liberation! This was especially so as smoking was forbidden with

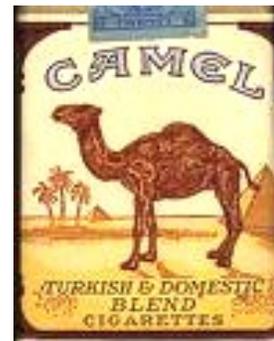
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<sup>3</sup> Philip Marlowe, the creation of the novelist Raymond Chandler (1888-1959), was an archetypal hard-boiled detective. He smoked Camels. Humphrey Bogart played him on screen in *The Big Sleep* (1946), the year the portrait above left was made by Karsh of Ottawa. It is hard to imagine that even in 2319 anyone will need to be reminded who Bogart or Sinatra were.

hysterical emphasis. Both my parents were heavy smokers of Chesterfield regulars – powerful cigarettes indeed – and knew how addictive (and probably, increasingly, especially as my father studied medicine, how dangerous) they were. So I was told *NEVER SMOKE!!* But *they* smoked constantly. Naturally I wanted to try it. So I pilfered cigarettes from my mother’s purse and ran to the next street to smoke them, down in those area-ways below street level they have in Manhattan, below stairs at what used to be the servants’ entrances to town houses, or in courtyards of large apartment buildings, much more accessible in those days than now when everything is locked. I could not be seen from the street, and I smoked up a storm.

Soon I bought cigarettes myself – not hard to do when no one cared much about who was buying, and when you could get a pack from a machine for 28 cents – put in 30 cents and get two pennies change inside the cellophane. I remember well going down to a building on 42nd Street and Fifth Avenue which had lots of shops with mirrored entrances and teaching myself to inhale with biofeedback from the mirrors. Once I learned to inhale, I kept on inhaling. After my mother’s Chesterfields – a bit harsh on my tender throat – I switched to filter cigarettes. Kents (with the Micronite® filter), Old Golds, Raleighs with their little coupons (I never did order anything).

But I settled on Camels, regular size, non-filter – “Camel straights.” They are the best American cigarettes. French cigarettes like Gauloises and Gitanes were delicious but a tad strong for everyday use, plus they were imported and so extra expensive, and not quite as cool because they showed you were *trying*. Philip Marlowe didn’t smoke French cigarettes! Lucky Strikes had a special flavor (“It’s Toasted!”) that I didn’t particularly like. If I couldn’t get Camels I smoked Pall Malls (or Philip Morris if I could find them). If all I could get was a filter cigarette, I snapped off the filter and discarded it. If all I could get was a menthol cigarette, I refused it and waited until I could get something else.



Camel straights were pretty strong – that’s one of the things I liked about smoking them – they communicated a kind of grown-up man-of-the-world aura I especially liked. No weak halfway cigarettes for me! Although not exactly *machismo*, it was the same sort of impulse. But also they were the best cigarettes.

I blush to recall that for some years I used a cigarette holder – I had one from Dunhill, and another made of amber. Philip Marlowe didn’t use those either, but Franklin Roosevelt did. In my defense I can only say that smoking four packs of Camels a day makes your tongue and lips kind of raw. But that wasn’t really it – I liked the way it looked and felt.

I learned to blow smoke rings. I also learned to inhale smoke up my nose, in the supposed French manner, and how to take a cigarette, moisten the paper all around it with my tongue, light it, and then tie it into a knot without breaking it. This would still be a good party trick if cigarettes were still allowed at parties, and if I still went to parties, and if I could still smoke.

Years later in Taiwan (see Chapter 22.C) there was an opportunity to do this earthy man-of-the-world thing again. Most of the cigarette brands in Taiwan were filter-tips, in imitation of American brands like Marlboro. But at the bottom of the social scale were very harsh regular-sized loosely packed rough non-filter cigarettes – my brand was called, ironically, Long Life. I smoked those in preference to the others – that they were far cheaper was an added advantage but not a factor in my choice. My students used to say no, don't smoke those, those are low-class cigarettes, have one of these, these are high class – the assumption being that as an American and a teacher I would want the highest class of everything. But I stayed with Long Life – I really preferred them, but also I enjoyed their low-class aura.

Once I started and learned how, I smoked as much as I possibly could. Until 1960 (age 15), my smoking was contained by the prohibition against smoking at home, and of course at school also. Still I managed to smoke plenty, with my friends and in their less prohibitory environments, on the street, here and there, and even at home when I thought I could get away with it. My parents must have known from the smell, if saturated with it as they were they could still smell tobacco smoke – they even caught me once, although I denied it. But there was little they could really do about it. As a prisoner in 1960-61 (see Chapter 8) I was provided with free cigarettes – not an unlimited amount, but enough for my habit then – a carton a week, Raleighs and Old Golds. When I returned to my parents' house in 1961 my smoking increased because (1) my parents' authority and inclination to meddle were both reduced, (2) my room was now on the top floor where no one went except Mary, who did not object to my smoking, and (3) smoking was allowed at Walden (outside the building). Then when I went to college, not only was smoking allowed everywhere including inside classrooms (hard to imagine today), but I had started using prescription amphetamines, which increased my smoking time by largely eliminating sleep.

Cigarettes were the main event, but I did try smoking a pipe when I was a teenager. However, there was too much hassle with equipment, pouches and pipe tools and pipe cleaners and what not, and also pipes kept going out.<sup>4</sup> Also cigars – they went on too long. Both pipes and cigars got yucky toward the end of the smoke. I did smoke cigars sometimes with Joel Solkoff, who really liked them, and he introduced me to Rum-

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<sup>4</sup> Now I know why cigarettes don't go out – as the comedian Godfrey Cambridge once explained, it is the additives, including gunpowder, that they put in the paper. But maybe it's not really gunpowder – maybe it's potassium nitrate. Whatever.

Soaked Crooks, which I enjoyed (I now realize) because they were soaked in sugar. I tried chewing tobacco and snuff once each – horrible! No, cigarettes were the ticket.

I continued to smoke Camel straights at a heavy rate until 1982. I stopped twice but couldn't stay off them. The first time was in 1974. When I started working as a librarian, I was a bit anxious at first, and started bumming occasional cigarettes from the secretaries (you could smoke in offices in those days). This soon got to the point where it would have been an imposition to keep bumming them, so I bought a pack, and went right back to smoking. I stopped again in 1980 – but the same thing happened in Israel in January 1981. I drove around Israel in a rented car and always stopped to pick up hitchhiking soldiers. They all smoked and offered me cigarettes, and I accepted because after all I was *on vacation*, when I got back to real life it would be different. Of course it wasn't different – once I broke my abstinence it was an easy slide back. I asked my assistant librarian to hold a pack for me and bummed *my own cigarettes* from her, but it was no use. The only way to stop was to *stop*. So in May 1982, when I went to Hawaii to consider whether to quit my job and move to Cape Cod, I vowed that when the plane left the ground that would be it for me with tobacco. And so it was – my tobacco sobriety date is May 27, 1982.

I never touched tobacco again – it is 28 years later as I write this – and I never will. I have the same understanding about it that recovering alcoholics have about alcohol – I can't have just *one*. I must never touch the stuff again. On a later trip to Israel, in 1984, I really wanted some cannabis and was offered the local hashish in tobacco, but I had to turn it down because of the tobacco. I don't think I was addicted in the chemical sense – I never suffered nicotine withdrawal. It was mostly a deeply ingrained habit fed by the associations, the feel of the cigarette between my fingers, the oral fixation, the gestures and mannerisms so familiar after many years. I used to say that smoking wasn't an addiction, it was a disorder of the hand – meaning if a person doesn't bring a cigarette to his mouth with his hand he won't smoke. I used the marijuana method of quitting – whenever you want a cigarette, smoke a joint. It will get you off tobacco, and you won't smoke 50 joints a day (fun though it would be to try).

By now I loathe the smell of stale cigarette smoke, and even the smell of unsmoked smoke rising from a cigarette is not as pleasant as it once was. I rarely think about tobacco now, and only occasionally do I feel it would be nice to have a cigarette. But even if the rules were suddenly changed, as in Woody Allen's film *Everything You Always Wanted to Know ...*, and cigarettes were now OK healthwise, I don't think I would smoke tobacco again. It would make me sick to my stomach, and anyway the motivations that got me smoking in 1956 no longer apply, now that I am an adult and smoking is no longer cool. That's one thing I really did get over. Mostly. Although if I were really *over* it, I would be able to smoke just one.

### C. Alcohol

I have mentioned how the fanatical prohibition of tobacco, by my parents who used tobacco heavily themselves, at least contributed to my own excessive use. By comparison, alcohol was treated non-hysterically. I was allowed small amounts of wine or beer when it was served at the table. I wasn't allowed full portions, or hard liquor, but only because I was too young, not because it was bad or forbidden. It was understood that it would be OK to drink like an adult when I became one, and in the meantime a small measure symbolically included rather than excluded me. No one in my family drank immoderately (as far as I knew then). As a result of this temperate approach, alcohol never acquired symbolic power for me, and so I never got into alcohol trouble. I didn't sneak alcohol, or (usually) get drunk.

- It is said that Ashkenazi Jews have a genetic protection against alcoholism, summed up in the aphorism “the Jews don't drink.” Some Jews do drink, of course, and are even alcoholics, but it is rare in our gene pool, and alcohol (except for ritual wine) was never part of our traditional culture. So maybe I had some unseen help in avoiding alcohol trouble.

I did experiment with drinking for a short time beginning when I was about 17 or 18. I was then a teenager who, although not fast himself (having no clue where the accelerator was), moved with a fastish crowd – the teen-aged children of wealthy New York families, who lived on the Upper East Side and went to a small group of private schools. There was alcohol at their parties, and not knowing what I was doing sometimes I had too much. I threw up on the carpeted stairway of one admired friend. But it didn't happen a lot, and after the novelty of being able to drink and seeing what it felt like had passed, I lost interest in alcohol. I was never good at maintaining the high – enough to stay high meant getting sick, and I hated that more than I liked the high. In fact I didn't like the high all that much anyway – it was a sort of sloppy furry high.<sup>5</sup>

Eighteen was the legal drinking age when I was growing up – a draft card was the preferred ID for boys – but it was not hard to get served at 17. I remember my first purchased drink (a beer) in an Irish bar on 79th Street while still at Collegiate (so I couldn't have been more than 15). I don't have a draft card, I said to the bartender – I'm a Canadian. That was usually all I needed to say – I had no trouble being served. And it was fun sometimes to go into a bar and order a beer and pretend to be a guy who knew his way around bars. I remember at about 18, fresh from having read *The Iceman Cometh*, going down to the sleaziest Bowery bar I could find, buying whiskey for the

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<sup>5</sup> I developed a useful rule of thumb: the moment I noticed with what fluid grace I was lifting the glass to my lips, I had to put it down again. I was at my limit, and even one more sip would be too much.

barflies, guzzling it down myself, and being sick in the taxi going home. This is what's meant by *experimenting with drugs*. I tried it out, found out what it felt like, and lost interest.

Today (in 2010), and for many years now, I scarcely drink alcohol at all. Every so often I have a beer with dinner – never more than one – and since diabetes I don't even do this very often. Once in a while I'll have a Dubonnet on the rocks, if I'm in a restaurant that has that kind of drink.<sup>6</sup> A person can't abuse Dubonnet – it's too sweet. On the road I'll have a whiskey sour at dinner, after the day's traveling is done. Years ago Joel Solkoff and I used to kill an occasional bottle of slivovitz, but no longer.

In Europe I drink beer more often, at café tables – when I'm traveling I get so much more exercise walking that it is OK despite diabetes. Wine I almost never touch anyway – it tastes to me like something went seriously wrong with the grape juice. Every once in a blue moon I will to order a glass of house red in an Italian restaurant, to drink with Italian bread – a good combination, but when the food comes I stop with the wine. Diabetes has mostly put an end to this too. People have tried to expose me to *good* wine, but it is no use. It all tastes pretty much the same to me. Hard liquor I drink very occasionally – my main use for Bombay sapphire gin and Bushmill's Irish whiskey (which I really like) is a slug at night if I'm having trouble getting to sleep, something pretty rare. Cannabis, when I smoked it, kept me awake, and alcohol took the edge off so I was not up all night. But this is really medicinal use. I have not done this much since I stopped using cannabis in November 2005. A bottle of Bushmill's will last me a year or two.



Guinness, though – that is the best stuff ever made! It doesn't travel well, and shouldn't be bottled or chilled ice-cold the way Americans do with everything. Real Guinness is *ichor*, the drink of the gods, and right behind it is real English ale, served at room temperature and with hardly any fizz, flat and warm as the American barbarians think of it. Delicious! That's one substance I could easily abuse if drinking too much of it didn't knock me right out. When I was in London with my girlfriend J. in 1994 I used to duck into pubs on the way to the theatre – she waited outside because she was allergic to smoke and there was then lots of smoke in London pubs, so I had to be quick – and toss down half a pint in each pub. Then I wondered why I kept falling asleep in the theatre.

- The first time I encountered Guinness and English ale was in 1979, my first trip abroad in many years. I went into a pub and asked in my broadest American

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<sup>6</sup> Future researchers: Dubonnet is a kind of sweet red French vermouth.

accent for a glass of beer. The very understanding bartender said sir, when you say *beer*, do you mean bitter or lager? Bitter, I said, having no idea really what it was but knowing what lager was and wanting something else. And when you say a *glass*, he continued, do you mean a pint or a half-pint? Half, I said, not knowing if I'd like the stuff. And I've never looked back.

#### D. Amphetamines

This was my first serious use of psychoactive drugs. In 1963, during my first semester at Columbia, I was doing poorly in school. My father believed in psychiatrists for solving problems, so he suggested that I see one for this problem. I had my own secret reason for agreeing to this, because in response to a particularly scary high school girlfriend I experienced a moment of impotence that frightened and upset me. So despite earlier events I agreed to see Dr. Saul Fisher, a typical pipe-smoking tweed-wearing what-do-you-think-about-that Jewish medicine man in the East Sixties. He was no help with Willie – what I needed there, as I soon found out without medical assistance, was not a psychiatrist but a gentler girlfriend, or maybe just a blow job. But he was a great help (or so it seemed) with my schoolwork. He offered me pills to increase my attention – they were of course speed. We tried several brands, and as for Goldilocks the third was just right.<sup>7</sup>



The third brand was Desoxyn – pharmaceutical methamphetamine hydrochloride straight from Abbott Laboratories to my pocket in small squarish glass bottles of 100 white five milligram tablets (left). In 1963 there was no medical inhibition to shoveling this stuff out in unlimited quantities. I was given a prescription marked *p.r.n.*, which meant essentially *take it whenever you need it, refill it whenever you like*. This unlimited prescription, requiring renewal only every few months, would not be allowed today for this drug, and would probably be malpractice even if it were allowed. But doctor's orders then were to take as much methamphetamine as I wanted, without any supervision or even monitoring of my intake. For more on this see Chapter 11.

Dr. Fisher, having served his historical purpose in my life, was allowed to fade away. As my father was a doctor, he took over Dr. Fisher's role of renewing this prescription on

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<sup>7</sup> In the children's story, Goldilocks is wandering in the forest and enters the house of the three bears. No one is home, but there are three bowls of porridge on the table. She tries the first one, but it is too hot. She tries the second one, but it is too cold. Then she tries the third one, and it is just right. The same with the chairs (too big or too small) and the beds (too hard or too soft). She goes to sleep in the third bed (just right) and then the bears come home. To spare their feelings, it is customary to lie to children, and tell them that Goldilocks was not eaten.

request. In eight years he never even asked how much of the stuff I used, even after I was suspended from Columbia in 1966. Perhaps he should have wondered whether amphetamines were (1) effective in their purpose of helping me with schoolwork, as I had just flunked out of college, and (2) still needed now that I was no longer in college. But he just kept on prescribing, and the pharmacies just kept on providing, and I kept on swallowing, enormous quantities of pharmaceutical meth. Maybe he just couldn't face the shriek of outrage that would certainly have come from me if he'd tried to stop the scrips.

My usual practice was to be high on speed all the time. If I needed to be up at nine, I would set the alarm for eight, pop 10 milligrams of Desoxyn, and go back to sleep for an hour. When the alarm went off again at nine I would wake up speeding, and would keep refreshing the dose all day long and most of the night too (I carried the bottle with me, along with my Zippo lighter). I was up most of the time. At one point I did not sleep at all, as far as I can remember, for a full month – I finally got some sleep when I tried to put a dime into a pay phone and noticed my hands were shaking. As I could get all I wanted, I gave out speed liberally to my friends, and many of my friends at Columbia and Penn would stay up all night with me, speeding.

Was my use excessive by the standards of the time? Well, my corner pharmacist in Philadelphia lost his license, in part because of the huge quantities he was giving me (also he didn't bother asking me to have my prescription renewed).

Amphetamines not only keep you awake, they kill your appetite – that's why speed is used for diet pills. I would get weak from hunger but be unable to eat – I started drinking Metrecal, a liquid nutrient, instead. Butterscotch was my favorite flavor, but vanilla was pretty good too. Of course I was smoking cigarettes constantly – not sleeping allowed me to smoke in the 4-pack-a-day range. There was a particular smell I used to get from speed – I guess I was completely saturated with the stuff. This went on for eight years, until I finished law school and took psychedelics, which snapped me out of amphetamines by prompting me to question the need to continue paying attention to what did not interest me. After that it took me about two years to bring back my normal energy. But I did get two degrees!

All this speed did help me concentrate on schoolwork, but I still didn't do well in school because I was unmotivated. I stayed up all night reading, but reading books that had not been assigned. See Chapter 11. When in 1967 I got motivated to do schoolwork I did fine in school, and did very well in law school too, but by this time I was accustomed to continuous doses of amphetamines and believed they were necessary in order to work. It's not that I was *addicted*, exactly – when I finally decided to stop I had no trouble doing it – it just never occurred to me to stop. In summer jobs during law school, and after I finished law school, I continued speeding. I was so exhausted by this time that I probably really *couldn't* have gone on any other way without a long rest (such as I got

after quitting the law). It took exactly one serious LSD session for me to realize this truth: *if you have to take speed to do it, stop doing it!* Quit the job, quit the pills – that was one of the best decisions I ever made.

After the change in my attitudes and occupation which followed my introduction to psychedelics, I stopped using amphetamines and have not touched them since my last days with Kennedy & Rhine early in 1972. Perhaps I would not have finished college or law school without them, and maybe that would have been all right. Or maybe I would have done fine without them if I had been allowed to take a break from school and not go back until I knew why I was there. Or maybe I would, unexpectedly, have done OK or even better with my not-so-heavy undergraduate responsibilities, if I just got some sleep once in a while. We'll never know.

### **E. Cannabis**

Cannabis! Where to start? I tried to score some hashish in Morocco in 1963, but they gave me incense instead and of course all I got was a headache. I guess lots of people were smoking dope at Columbia College during my time there, but if I smoked any it was only occasionally – people would wait at parties until the outer circle had left and then the inner circle would break out the pot. In law school in 1968 my girlfriend used to get grass from time to time, which was nice but not a big deal for me. My next girlfriend, in 1969, also had some, and I would smoke it with her sometimes. I remember once getting really stoned (perhaps because I had also taken some sleeping pills) and observing the whole scene from above as I lay conked out on the bed – she prodded me, and I was aware of it but I couldn't quite respond.<sup>8</sup> During law school I went into New York from time to time where there were parties with joints and hash brownies – one memorable night I ate a lot of them, not coming on, until finally they all came on at once.



But these were isolated episodes, not part of a pattern of use. It was amusing but not important to me – I never had any pot of my own, and unless someone offered me some I wouldn't think to smoke any. This changed in San Francisco in 1971, during the summer of studying for the bar examination, when I met Les Wisner and his girlfriend (soon afterwards wife) Makiko. I tell in Chapter 16 how I learned from Les to smoke as much of it as possible.

I spent many evenings (and far into the night) at their apartment, smoking dope and watching old movies on television. I was delighted to spend time this way – I was

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<sup>8</sup> I have since learned that this is typical of a near-death experience. I doubt I was near death at 25 from a little grass and a couple of Tuinals.

stressed out from studying for the bar, from eight years of speed (which I was still taking in the usual large quantities), and from more than 20 years on the education conveyor belt. Marijuana not only relaxed me and made socializing jollier, but opened up new avenues of perception.

It seemed to me that I saw more when I was stoned. I don't think this was a mistake, or that I just *thought* that because I was stoned. I think I *really did* see more, and see more deeply. It also facilitated the making of *Gestalts* both visual and intellectual. Later on, when I began taking LSD, I sensed a continuity between marijuana and LSD. LSD was of course a much deeper and more overwhelming experience. But the heightened consciousness seemed of a piece to me.

In particular, I got a lot more out of books and art when I had had some cannabis. I saw more in them – maybe this was as a result of taking more time to look, but also I thought faster and concentrated more deeply, and was helped to see better. There was a side effect to this – I was more easily distracted. For example, when reading a book under the influence of cannabis, I was more likely to go from the book to explore a point in a reference work, and from there to another reference work, and from that to something else, and often not get back to the original book for some time. But I don't think that was a bad thing – usually I was reading the book to learn something, and by following up in this way I was learning more thoroughly. Plus the reason I had all those reference books was to use them in just this way. That I ended up spending a couple of hours pursuing a subject through five books rather than just one doesn't seem like a drawback to me at all. Nor was it a distraction, really – I was still learning, and all learning is really indivisible – lines separating one field of study from another are essentially arbitrary.<sup>9</sup>

For a certain class in library school we had to read John Carter's *ABC for Book Collectors* all the way through, with a "Carter quiz" every week. Carter explained very clearly and interestingly a whole glossary of technical terms about books – *foxing*, for example, and *fore-edge* and *running head* and *colophon*.<sup>10</sup> I nearly always got 100%. Why, colleagues asked me – what was my secret? My secret was smoking marijuana before reading the assignment. (The other secret, of course, was *actually reading* the assignment – in college I skipped this step. Without reading the assignment, cannabis would not have helped.)

Similarly in my legal work, I would often think about a complex legal problem and reach a point when I needed to stop for a while to process what I had already read and written

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<sup>9</sup> The great columnist and wit Franklin P. Adams (1881-1960) said: "I find that a great part of the information I have was acquired by looking up something and finding something else on the way."

<sup>10</sup> It is with a tip of the hat to John Carter that I include a colophon in this book – see page xxxi.

and thought about. I found that smoking a little grass at this point clarified my thinking dramatically. Suddenly the issues which had been turning around in my mind all fell into place, and the answers became obvious. I know this was not just an illusion because I usually made quick notes in my pocket notebook about the solutions that occurred to me while stoned, and the next day the solutions still seemed to be the right ones.

Likewise a little grass was great for writing an outline – all the ideas came pouring out as if unbidden. But it was not so good for actually writing *from* the outline – when I was stoned I would get hung up on individual phrases. I learned to use marijuana for solving problems and writing outlines, but not for research and writing actual text.

- When I was the librarian at Farella Braun & Martel I was stoned almost all the time – I smoked on my way to work, on my way back from lunch, and sometimes on the roof during the work day. Not only did it not impair my work, I think it helped, because as in other areas I saw more, my understanding and integration of what I saw was heightened, and I was more relaxed.

From 1971 on I smoked almost every day, and often during the day. I grew very adept at rolling joints, and carried them around with me everywhere in a little case. Regular cigarette cases were too large. At first I converted a certain kind of rectangular compact of just the right size, in plastic *faux* tortoiseshell stamped with the Russian imperial arms – I scraped the powder out and just used the case. Later Andy Schwartzman gave me a special joint case made of leather, with little pouches for individual joints. I used it for decades.

I also solved the roach clip problem. Marijuana is expensive, so it doesn't do to throw away the roach when it gets too short to smoke, the way you would with a cigarette butt. I used to collect them and recycle the marijuana, but that was inconvenient. Roach clips were a nuisance, you still got your lips right up against the coal, and they were made of metal, which could trip a metal detector. Cigarette holders were too wide, as they were designed for factory-made tobacco cigarettes. I finally found a solution by taking long tubes of glass which I bought at a chemical apparatus supply house in deepest industrial Oakland, scoring them with a file so they would snap off cleanly, and then breaking them this way into small tubelets about three inches long and filing the sharp edges smooth. The tubelets fit perfectly into a pocket of the joint case, and a roach fit perfectly into a tubelet and could be smoked down to a cinder with ease and comfort.

I smoked cannabis regularly for the next 34 years, from 1971 through 2005. By 2005 I was still smoking almost every day, but in much smaller quantities than before – maybe a total of a half a joint a day. Partly this was because the dope was much stronger than in the old days, but mainly it was because the novelty of the stoned perspective was gone – I had so internalized it that I *always* saw that way, and grass didn't change the view much. I was still getting the benefit of cannabis when I figured out professional problems, but I

was not getting “stoned” in a recognizable way – recognizable anyway by reference to previous experiences.

This could have been predicted. My first experiences with cannabis – even before the summer of 1971 – were very dramatic, almost hallucinatory. I remember one evening at Peter Miller’s house in Berkeley in the winter of 1969-70, smoking grass and staring at a Christmas tree. The decorations of the tree turned into German silver – very trippy. In later years I did not have reactions of this kind. My experience was heightened but not transformed, although when I coughed with lungs full of marijuana smoke I would sometimes get kind of dizzy for a moment, and for that same moment much more stoned. The more years I smoked, the less dramatic was the effect. Finally I was not experiencing much of an effect at all except, as noted, in organizing thoughts.

- Christopher refers to the routine use of cannabis for everyday occasions – getting stoned before going to a movie, for instance, or automatically toking up just because it can be done – as “MSG for life.” This is not a sensible way to use cannabis.<sup>11</sup>

Still I swore by cannabis, and never imagined I would ever give the stuff up. I had stopped temporarily at various points, but while it felt good to dry out, so to speak, I never regarded the change as permanent. Then in November 2005 I got really sick – for more on this illness see Chapter 34. I was in the hospital for three weeks, in two episodes, and of course could not smoke there. When I got out my lungs were in bad shape – I still had a lot of fluid in them, and I was coughing very severely. So I still couldn’t smoke. By the time my lungs recovered to the point where I could smoke again it was four months later (March 2006). By this time I was used to not smoking and somehow didn’t feel the inclination to start again. I just seemed to have lost interest. From a 2006 e-mail:

Not smoking at all since November – I couldn’t for months. Now I’m playing along with that, because if I start smoking again I think I will go back to smoking a lot, being an addictive personality, and a little voice tells me better not. Rather than challenge the little voice and tell it to go f\*\*\* itself, it can’t tell ME what to do, I am listening to it. Could this mean I am finally wising up? Could that possibly be?

I did smoke once or twice after that, because it helped with sometimes debilitating eyestrain, but unaccountably I no longer liked the sensation of being stoned. Except for

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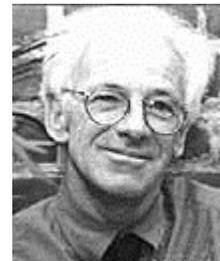
<sup>11</sup> Future researchers: MSG is monosodium glutamate, sold as a taste-enhancer and included without notice in restaurant food. Not good for you. By the time you read these words there will probably be no such thing any more.

these few episodes, I have not smoked since November 2005 – almost five years as I write this.<sup>12</sup>

I sometimes check and ask myself: do you feel like getting stoned? But I never do feel like it. I like it better this way. I don't *pledge* I will not change my mind again some day. But I avoid trying just one joint, or even one toke, because I fear that if I do I will start daily dope-smoking again, and I don't want to do that. I have more energy, and my friends say I seem stronger and more lively. So I think I am finished with cannabis now. I didn't *swear off*, the way I did with tobacco – as noted, I just lost interest. I'm not *against* it, as some former druggies become after they quit. Pot was great for me, it's a good path to knowledge and awareness, and I'm all for it. It's just that I think I have got all I am going to get out of it. I have smoked my way through to the other side. But y'all go ahead – don't mind me – toke up, I'm fine with it.

- I note in passing that I think if I were still smoking grass I would probably not have started this memoir, or kept at it to get this far through it, or remembered as much as I have been remembering. Instead of sitting down to write, I would probably have gotten stoned instead.

I took part in planning and drafting a number of California ballot initiatives aimed at legalizing marijuana use in one way or another. I worked with the activist Dennis Peron (right) and the late lawyer and pothead Leo Paoli on some of these. None of them got even close to passing. After a number of failures the heavyweights in the pot movement made a decision to concentrate on medical marijuana. I opposed this at first because I felt it made an unjustifiable distinction between sick people and well ones, and overlooked the human right to get high whether you were sick or not. The people in favor of the medical approach argued that it would be an easier sell to concentrate on sick people first, and after sick people had been legally smoking pot for a while without turning into rapists or burglars or junkies, it would be a lot easier to make the case for easing the law for everyone else. They turned out to be right.



The first big push for medical marijuana came from Dennis, a hero of human rights as far as I'm concerned. He established what he called the San Francisco Cannabis Club in a good-sized building on Market Street between Polk and Van Ness – anyone who could show a doctor's letter, *or* was over 60, could get in, and once in buy marijuana and smoke it there. This was before the law changed. I didn't have a doctor's letter but my Hindu teacher, the artist and grand-hippie Michael Bowen (see Chapter 18.F) knew Dennis well and asked him to let me in. How old are you, said Dennis (I was at this time around 51).

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<sup>12</sup> I don't like being high on codeine either now, which I used to, and resist taking it for pain or coughs.

Fifty-one, I said. Wrong answer, he said, try again. Eighteen, I said. Wrong again, said Dennis, try one more time. Sixty, I said. Right! said Dennis, and I was in.

>It was very exhilarating to be inside this club and to smoke freely and openly in public. The club offered many kinds of cannabis – as in the famous cafés of Amsterdam, the various grades were marked on a slate, priced by the gram and by fractions of an ounce, up to one ounce, which is all a person was allowed to buy at one time to prevent the club from becoming a wholesaler and losing its supposed *raison d'être* of serving the sick. I always went for the top of the line, because I had the money and because it is a false economy to buy inferior dope – you just end up smoking more of it to get the same effect. I got most of my dope from an upstate friend who grew it himself, but I shopped at the clubs for small quantities of other flavors for variety. The clubs also had more exotic forms of cannabis including kif, hashish and hash oil, and baked goods. The people behind the counter, and the people who ran the elevator (which had a sofa in it) and performed other service functions at the club, were paid mostly in marijuana, the smell of which permeated the whole building. There was a superb view of City Hall and a lounge where I used to come after work to turn on and enjoy the vibes. It was wonderful – it felt like *freedom*.



Proposition 215, the Compassionate Use Act, was on the ballot in 1996. This measure provided that people who had a doctor's recommendation to use marijuana would have a defense to the state laws against possession and cultivation (although not sale) of small quantities. Dennis Peron was behind the campaign. Its main opponent was Dan Lungren, a particularly stupid and vicious Republican state attorney general (now [2010] a stupid and vicious Republican Congressman). Not long before the election he used state narks to bust Dennis' club – his complaint was that Dennis let in a lot of people who weren't sick, including some undercover agents. The very fact that even a savage Republican



troglodyte like Lungren chose to make his objection not on the basis that Dennis was selling pot, which was illegal no matter who bought it, but that he was selling it *to people who weren't sick*, showed the wisdom of the decision to move the focus of activism to medical marijuana.

A lot of the people who patronized the club were, of course, people with AIDS, people in wheelchairs, undoubtedly really sick, and the television reporting showed a lot of these people outside the club after the

bust, anguished and outraged at what Lungren had done. I went there the next day and many of these people were still there, still anguished and outraged – I was too. This turned the tide in the election. If Lungren had not busted the club, Proposition 215 would probably have failed like all the others, but after the uproar and the wheelchairs and the AIDS patients weeping in the street, it passed by a comfortable margin. A copy of the law, which under California initiative practice became effective immediately after it was certified as passed, is attached as Document 17-1. Similar laws are now on the books in several other states.<sup>13</sup>

After Proposition 215 passed, pot clubs appeared all over the state. There were many in San Francisco. The rules differed – usually they required a doctor’s letter, and had a mechanism for checking its authenticity. I was a member of CHAMP, an acronym for something or other, on Church Street just north of Market. As a backup I also joined ACT-UP, the AIDS activist organization, which had a small pot outlet further up Market toward Castro Street. I didn’t use that one much, but I did go to CHAMP, which had a lounge and good vibes much like Dennis’ club had had, and free oranges.

The law did not exactly *legalize* marijuana – it only provided a defense to state prosecution. This left federal authorities still free to prosecute, which the local United States Attorney was originally unwilling to do until that arch-hypocrite Bill Clinton leaned on him. Then he began shutting down the clubs by injunction instead of by bust, which was more humane but still of course quite unnecessary. I believe President Clinton ordered this because the U.S. Attorney wasn’t interested in moving against the clubs, but after a long period of *de facto* toleration suddenly changed his mind. This had to be on orders, which either meant Attorney General Janet Reno or President Clinton, and I think it unlikely that Reno would have acted on such a sensitive matter, especially in California, without directions from above. I cannot prove this, but that’s what I think.

- Although the Supremacy Clause prevented Proposition 215 from affecting the federal laws against possession and cultivation of marijuana, always my view and confirmed by *Gonzales v. Raich*, 545 U.S. 1 (2005), by the same token the federal laws could not affect Proposition 215, because all the Proposition did was create a *defense to state prosecution*. While the feds could do whatever they wanted *themselves*, they couldn’t *force California* to prosecute anyone, or preempt a defense under state law, so the law was immune to any kind of



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<sup>13</sup> Now, fourteen years later, there is a lot more law on this in California than just the initiative – there is another statute, and an Attorney General’s Opinion, and considerable case law. But because a state law passed by initiative cannot be altered except by popular vote, the basic reform is safe, and the quibbles are about how much a person can have, and how and where marijuana dispensaries can operate. The appellate decisions have respected rather than evaded the law’s intent to allow people access to marijuana for medical conditions on a doctor’s recommendation.

federal override. Federal harassment of the clubs continued throughout the administration of Bush 43, but a few weeks into the Obama administration Attorney General Eric Holder (above) announced an end to that policy, and a federal hands-off on conduct that was in compliance with state law. *Go-bama!*

Despite federal action, the clubs stayed in business, and when injunctions came down against some, others arose. After a while the heat went off again. It was in the interest of local authorities to regularize the distribution of pot rather than let a hundred flowers



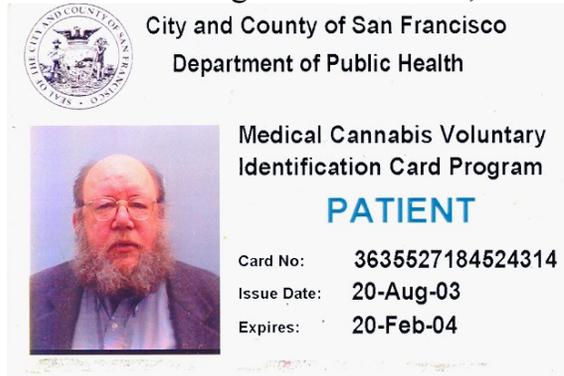
bloom, and no one wanted to repeat Lungren's mistake and come down publicly on the lame and the halt. I got my letter from Dr. Eugene Schoenfeld (left), a friend of Rosemary Woodruff-Leary's from the long-ago day when he was the counterculture health columnist Dr. Hippocrates in the *East Village Other*. I also knew him from fund-raising functions for NORML (National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws), and raised the subject of a letter with him at Leo Paoli's funeral in April 1997. I went to see him at his Sausalito office, and told him truthfully that I used to suffer from mildish

depression, but smoking (along with Buddhism and homeopathic sulfur) kept it under control. I also used it to treat debilitating eyestrain, which could sometimes force me to lie down and go to sleep – marijuana made attacks of this eyestrain, which affected me pretty seriously, fade completely away. Gene wrote a recommendation that I use pot for disthymia, which is shrinkspeak for mildish depression, and renewed it after a face-to-face interview every year (it used to be every six months, the limit for prescribing scheduled drugs, but the rules changed and Gene raised it to a year). A copy of one of his letters is attached as Document 17-2.

The law did not limit what kind of ailment qualified for protection, but after listing some also included "any other illness for which marijuana provides relief." Of course it was up to the patient to say whether he experienced relief or not. The law was also cleverly written in that it had the doctor provide a *recommendation* rather than a *prescription*. Due to political pressure cannabis was excluded from the U.S. Pharmacopoeia, under the provably false rationale that it had no medical use at all for anything, and so there could be federal consequences for *prescribing* it. The careless use of the word *prescribe* prevented the Arizona law from actually being used. The feds tried to pressure California doctors not to *recommend* either, under pain of losing their narcotics licenses, which would have crippled their ability to practice. But the Ninth Circuit sustained an injunction against this abusive practice – see *Conant v. Walters*, 309 F.3d 629 (9th Cir. 2002). After I stopped using cannabis I stopped renewing my letter, and find I am not troubled by disthymia, although eyestrain is still a problem.

County health departments began issuing their own photo ID cards to people who had the right letters. Using Gene's letter I obtained a San Francisco card. With this card I felt

quite safe smoking openly on the street anywhere in California, except on federal lands such as the National Seashore. It felt very good to smoke walking down the street, or standing in line outside a theatre – as in the clubs, it felt like freedom. It was hard to unlearn paranoia, but I kept reminding myself that smoking a joint right out on the street was COMPLETELY LEGAL.



- This may no longer be true after San Francisco passed a law forbidding smoking in parks and other outdoor spaces – no one enforces this law, but it would provide a pretext to ticket someone with a joint, not for the dope but for smoking. An academic point for me now.
- I was careful not to smoke in the car, because if I were stopped and the car smelled like dope the officer could charge me with driving under the influence, which Proposition 215 did not affect. I always stopped, left the car, closed the windows, and smoked in the open air. I never felt at all impaired driving while stoned – in fact, it heightened awareness and attention. But one time many years ago I figured well, if I can drive high on pot maybe I can drive high on alcohol, and drove home after a few drinks at Vesuvio’s. That was a scary ride – I never did that ever again.

Over many years of smoking cannabis I developed a connoisseur’s appreciation for the stuff. A friend and I would try various types – Oaxaca and Guerrero, for example, in the days when the best American dope came from Mexico, or pot grown from different seeds, after California-grown dope became the best – and speak of their flavors and smoothness and effects and highlights in terms usually used by wine mavens. The seed catalogues used by advanced growers, and reviews in journals like *High Times*, read just like wine writing.

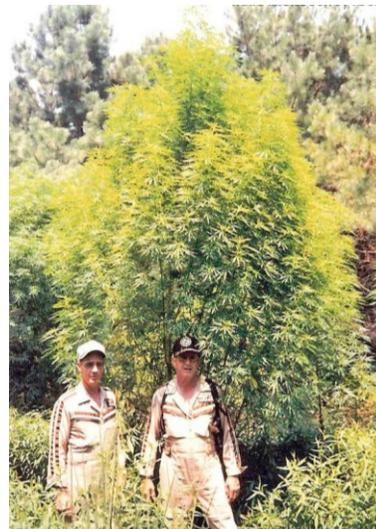


There are subtle differences among different kinds of cannabis – we spoke of them as *head* or *body*. Some head varieties, for example, which I favored, stimulate perception and thinking and help work or study, although it is often hard to sleep after using them. Body varieties have more of a physical effect; some people grow drowsy after using them. This body-head distinction is common when contrasting *cannabis sativa*, common hemp and the main American species (*sativa* means *cultivated*), which tends toward the head, with *cannabis indica*, Indian hemp and the main Asian variety, which while still mightily affecting the head tends toward body on this spectrum. Dope from Vietnam and so-called “Thai sticks” were *indica*, and *indica* has been extensively cross-bred with native *sativa*. But even within a “pure” *sativa*, the different psychoactive chemical

elements (not only THC), and other factors such as the method and stage of curing, can alter the balance between head and body, so grass which had a head effect when first used might have a body effect a few months later.<sup>14</sup>

- I found that my reaction of being unable to sleep after smoking is fairly unusual – many people, particularly inexperienced users, will go from high to hungry to asleep quite quickly. The effect was so marked with me that I would often not smoke in the evening to avoid insomnia, or deliberately smoke when I needed to stay awake, for example to finish packing before a trip the next day. I found the invigorating effect of head dope useful in making myself do tasks I had been putting off but could no longer postpone, like opening my mail.
- It occurs to me, reading this over, that heightened attention and an invigorating effect was more or less what I was trying for with speed in college. How much more wholesome it would have been for me if I'd used cannabis then instead of speed!

Pot grows really well in Northern California – Napa, Sonoma, Mendocino, Lake and especially Humboldt Counties – and I have visited growing projects up there just before harvest time. Some intensely cultivated marijuana plants can grow to 14 feet or more and look like big bushy Christmas trees. Left alone they can grow even higher, but spindly – not good for cultivation where you want a high incidence of buds but not sun leaves. Good practice is to cut them back – when a leading bud is pruned, two buds replace the one pruned away (apical dominance). The male plants must also be removed – only females are good for smoking, and it is not good to let them fertilize.<sup>15</sup> Shown is an exceptional example, pictured in a Humboldt County newspaper.



- Dennis Peron had a pot farm in Lake County, where he grew pot for his club members on the theory that he was a “caregiver” for them within the language of the statute. I don’t agree with his statutory analysis, but his dope was terrific. His farm and its bright green crops were visible from the road – in typical Dennis

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<sup>14</sup> In addition to sativa and indica there is a third variety, from Siberia, called *cannabis ruderalis*. I have never smoked or even seen any *ruderalis*, and it has not been bred for potency like the other two species. But *ruderalis* plants tend to be short and bushy rather than tall, which can help in concealing them while they grow if that’s necessary, and I have heard that some advanced growers have cross-bred with *ruderalis* to get this effect.

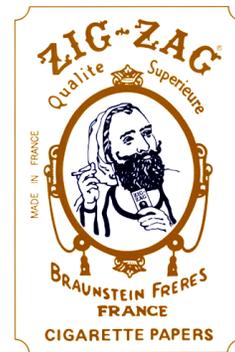
<sup>15</sup> For more about this, interested readers will find Robert Connell Clarke, *Marijuana Botany* (1981), a good place to start.

fashion nothing was hidden – and it was quite an experience to walk through his farm checking out the magnificent plants all around me.



I enjoyed cannabis in many forms. My favorite was joints – I know a pipe is thriftier, but it is messy, and requires equipment, and keeps going out, and spilling, and it is impossible to smoke outside because the least breeze will blow the dope out of the bowl. As I had plenty of dope the savings were not important; and while it was easier on the throat not to smoke paper, the joint was all-around so convenient and portable a delivery system that I preferred it. Also you could smoke just as much as you wanted and let the joint go out, and it stayed neatly stored until relighted, and was self-contained and did not require paraphernalia, or look suspicious except at very close range. In my earliest days I used a joint-rolling machine, but I got extremely good at rolling joints and no longer needed it. Practice makes perfect!.

- Zig-Zag regulars were my preferred paper. In 1976 Ron sold Acapulco Gold brand papers in his plant store – they were made from hemp fiber, and had Washington’s picture on the front because he grew hemp at Mount Vernon. Hemp fiber is useful for all kinds of things and there was briefly an attempt to free up marijuana by building a constituency for hemp. Cigarette papers are also very good for repairing torn pages in books – I still carry a pack with me in my traveling kit for that purpose.



- Cleaning the dope used to be a big deal, back when dope had seeds. You used a shoe-box lid and tilted it so the seeds rolled to the bottom. But since California *sensimilla* (seedless) became the predominant type, that hasn’t been necessary. Now you just let it dry enough to crumble and then crumble it – the stems come away easily and there are no seeds.
- Marijuana sealed in Zip-Loc plastic bags, kept inside other Zip-Locs and stored in the refrigerator (*not* the freezer), will last for years. The fridge will dry it out some, which makes it easier to crumble away from the stem. I used to keep mine in the fridge in a padlocked metal toolbox, so that no visiting policeman would be able to claim it was in plain view, but after I got a Prop 215 card I did not bother with this. I was within the law to have what I had.

As well as pipes and joints, I have also used:

- Bong and water pipes. Too complicated.

- The Vaporizer<sup>®</sup>. This became popular at the clubs – it was like a water pipe, but instead of setting the dope in the bowl on fire, you held something like a car cigarette lighter over it. This released the aromatic oils which contained the psychoactive ingredients, without burning the dope, so all you inhaled through the tube was invisible gas rather than the particulate matter of burning leaves. When the oils were gone the flavor of the smoke changed; on this signal you just discarded the spent grass, and if needed added more to the bowl. This was great in theory, and important for people with compromised respiratory systems, but Vaporizers were expensive and bulky, and shared all the disadvantages of water pipes. I never bothered with them outside the clubs.
- Sealed containers shaped like large bullets with dope inside, smoked like pipes but self-contained. These don't work all that well as they leak, the contents get stale, and the dope in the corners of the chamber does not burn.
- Hashish. This is wonderful stuff, smoked plain or mixed with grass, but hard on the throat. I remember some great hash, called *Nepalese temple balls* and nicely opiated (right). It was probably from Afghanistan rather than Nepal, but so what? There was some other hash that got me right to a place of religious devotion, and yet other kinds more reddish than brown, that did other things. The clubs started selling California hashish but I never used much of it.
 
- Hash oil. This was distilled down from hashish and came in a tiny vial of viscous brown syrup. You would take a drop on the end of a paper-clip, heat it with a soldering iron, and inhale the smoke. Very nice – I made a kind of smoking lamp with a soldering iron in a stand I made from plumbing parts and hose clamps. But then I realized that inhaling this from a paperclip meant breathing in aluminum and maybe even aluminum oxide, which can cause brain damage of the Alzheimer's type, so I stopped doing that.
  - Another good use for hash oil was to take a few drops on a paperclip and smear it on a rolling paper, and then use the paper to roll a joint. This made for a hashish-enhanced joint. But as I smoked less and less I stopped doing this too. Also hashish (often made with indica) made the dope a body smoke, and I preferred a head smoke.
- Kif, which I got sometimes in the old days and later from the clubs, is a kind of greenish-yellow powder. It is made from dried cannabis trichomes (the resin glands, the fine sticky hairy-seeming structures in the bud), collected with a kif-screen. Very nice smoked pure or dusted on a joint.

- Baked goods, mainly brownies or cookies, were available at the clubs for people who had lung problems and couldn't smoke. I didn't favor this method because it was hard to regulate the dose, you didn't come on for quite a while, and when you did come on you stayed stoned at unpredictable levels for unpredictably long periods. I preferred the joint method, which was more under my control.
- Marinol, a prescription drug made from cannabis and used for nausea from chemotherapy, was the same, only weaker. I had access to Marinol from someone I knew who got it legitimately, but didn't like it much.
- In Cape Cod some visitors knew how to make tinctures, and I sacrificed an ounce of dope to this method. They made a tincture, all right, using alcohol (vodka), but you had to drink so much of it to get high that before you got high you got drunk on the vodka. Not a success.

#### Other cannabis memories:

- Every year NORML, the cannabis legalization lobby, gave a fund-raising party, usually at the home of a wealthy doctor in Tiburon. The minimum contribution was \$100. Ron Green and I went every year. It was a great party – there were rousing speeches and terrific food – and of course people brought superb dope in great quantities. George Zimmer – the tycoon of Men's Wearhouse, a discount clothing chain – would bring great cigar-like spliffs. At a party like that you just launch a joint into the world and it never comes back, but you smoke other joints as they come around. San Francisco District Attorney Terence “Kayo” Hallinan was a regular at these parties too – he was dope-friendly, although I never saw him smoke while in office. Ram Dass was usually there also, and Gene Schoenfeld, and other friends from the marijuana movement. Then one year the doctor went vegan, and so the food became terrible, and I stopped going, although I continued to contribute.
- Munchies were a problem for me – after smoking I would get hungry, and mainly wanted sugar. This was bad anyway as I was overweight, and once in the grip of the munchies just a little would not do. After I became a diabetic, filling up on sweets became dangerous.
- A friend from OMSA (the Orders and Medals Society of America) was a retired police inspector in his late 70s. His wife, about the same age, was ill and much afflicted with nausea. I told him the law allowed his wife (with a doctor's recommendation) to treat her nausea with cannabis, and if he approved I would set this up for her. He approved and I brought them some dope. We sat around the kitchen table rolling joints, as I taught her how to do it. The joint-rolling party at the home of this retired police couple is one of my most surreal marijuana memories.

## F. Psychedelics

I was eager to try psychedelics, which by 1971 were an important part of the counterculture I was coming to identify with. Les Wisner, my pot instructor in the summer of 1971, had done lots of LSD in the army. He no longer tripped himself, but his army friend Norm Gravem lived with his delightfully named girlfriend Trena Beagle in a small house in the woods near Feather Falls, Butte County. They had access to LSD, so one weekend Les and Makiko and I all went up to Feather Falls to initiate me.



My first time up there I took what was supposed to be mescaline, although most of the “mescaline” taken by amateurs in those days was really LSD. I got very high, although it was not the transforming high of my next trip, and drove into the town of Oroville. I amused myself while driving by changing my perception of the pitch of the road – I would see it at 45 degrees, and then at 90 degrees straight up, and then back at 45 degrees but the road was like a ribbon and I was driving on the underside of it rather than on top, like an ant on a blade of grass.<sup>16</sup> Oroville when I got there was like a painting by de Chirico. I really shouldn’t have been driving at all. This trip was great fun, but not more than fun.

The second trip, on another weekend, was the important one, the Meatball trip. It was the turning point of my life – as Christopher puts it about an episode in his life, it was *The Day Everything Changed*.<sup>17</sup> It opened me to a depth of awareness and a dimension of life I had not suspected before. I won’t develop this here because I describe this trip and its insights and effects in some detail in Chapter 18.C. Interested readers unfamiliar with LSD might wish to turn to it now – it might make what follows here easier to understand.

I continued to take LSD often thereafter. It was always instructive. I kept visiting the same place – it was the everyday world, but amplified enormously, with its structure and sinews all visible, and breathtakingly beautiful. Unlike some people, I never hallucinated – I only saw what was there, but I saw much *more* of what was there than I did otherwise. In *The Doors of Perception* (1954), Aldous Huxley writes about this experience. I never experienced the cellular and molecular consciousness Leary speaks of in his books. But what I did experience was a revelation, every time, even though it was usually a

<sup>16</sup> Having learned the technique, I can still do this if I feel like it, without even taking any drugs. But without taking drugs I don’t often feel like it.

<sup>17</sup> The “hit by the meatball” image is from the underground cartoonist Robert Crumb.

revelation of the same thing – the luminous, numinous, scruminous reality of the Greater World, a temporarily unbounded viewpoint of transcendent awareness.

Even a brief experience of an unbounded viewpoint (an oxymoron of course – there is no “point” if the view is unbounded) helps expand a person’s regular viewpoint, because you remember it when you come down and can no longer take the socialized viewpoint as unchallenged reality. LSD suspends socialization and permits re-imprinting, a crucial step toward liberation from ordinary, highly conditioned consciousness.

- For more on psychedelics and imprinting, see Leary’s book *Exo-Psychology*, epitomized very briefly in Chapter 19.B.

I wrote this in 2002 to a friend who had never taken LSD.

I at least have never had unpleasant hallucinations on acid, and I’ve taken a lot of acid. In fact I never hallucinate at all, just see 50,000% more clearly right down to the core of life. All right, some pattern-making, and vapor trails, and visual metaphors, but no six-foot rabbits or anything (others report more adventurous experiences).<sup>18</sup> And far from being unpleasant, what I have seen on acid has been more transcendently world-shakingly beautiful than anything else I’ve ever seen or imagined. It is a 100% positive experience – don’t believe what you read.<sup>19</sup>

Readers who have used the word processing program called WordPerfect will remember the *reveal codes* function. With this function off the codes (which determined, for example, whether you were typing in a plain or italic font) were invisible. Turning on this feature allowed you to see the codes which were determining the way the document was being made. LSD was sort of like that – the unseen codes which determined your outlook and behavior were suddenly made visible. That let you change them. Until you could see them, voluntary change was nearly impossible.

For such a verbal person as I had always been, using words as my primary mechanism for coping with life, to have an experience which transcended verbal concepts was revelatory. There is a reason why the mystical experience – for that is what psychedelics induce – is so hard to describe. You cannot describe it in words because the understanding is beyond words. Psychedelics (meaning in Greek *mind manifesters*) are sometimes called *entheogens*, meaning in Greek roughly *agents for bringing forth the god within*.

Every trip had a theme, and during the trip all that I observed and all the insights I gained related themselves to this theme. I realize it is hard for those who have not taken LSD

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<sup>18</sup> Referring here to *Harvey*, a play by Mary Chase (Pulitzer Prize, 1945) made into a 1950 movie with James Stewart, about a man and a rabbit six feet tall no one else can see.

<sup>19</sup> Except, I should have added, what you read in e-mails from me.

themselves to understand what I am talking about.<sup>20</sup> It would take a better writer than I am – Aldous Huxley, for example, or Alan Watts – to convey the sense and quality of an acid trip.<sup>21</sup> Mystical experiences are notoriously ineffable, and mine were no more effable than other people’s. I attach as Document 17-3 a very prosaic attempt – one page from a letter I wrote to Peter Miller about a trip I took in November 1998. I was 54 and this was one of my last trips. This would be a good time to read that letter, on page 415.

An acid trip is physically quite demanding. I used to set aside two days at least – one for the trip and one to rest up. I would typically drop the acid in the morning – usually it was on gaily colored squares of blotter paper, on which LSD in solution had been placed with an eyedropper so each square was a uniform dose (see right, about 3 times actual size, and also the tailpiece to Chapter 16).<sup>22</sup> I would eat several tiny squares of blotter – a moderately high dose – and wait for the results. As I write this I can remember the itchy feeling on the soles of my feet which meant it was taking effect. After about an hour I was tripping.



I was usually very cold when tripping, and would tremble a bit as if I had a fever chill. Smoking cigarettes was a great help; after I quit tobacco I smoked cannabis, although later I stopped doing that as I didn’t want to confuse the effect of LSD with another psychoactive drug. It would probably not have made any difference. Hot drinks like tea were also welcome, although usually I tripped alone and had no one to prepare them for me. Eventually, after about ten hours or so, the trip winds down. That’s usually the time to eat something (not meat) and take a Valium, because the brain is so stimulated from the acid it’s hard to slow it down to cruising speed even when the trip is over. It’s very hard to sleep the night after an acid trip – for me it usually took a couple of sleeping pills. The whole process is quite uncomfortable, but O so worth it. Rest the whole next day, and the day after too if you can.

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<sup>20</sup> So go take some.

<sup>21</sup> LSD meant *lysergic acid diethylamide* – that’s why it was called *acid* for short.

<sup>22</sup> The blotters in this image are from much later – some are dated as late as 2000. The bicycles allude to the 1943 bicycle trip home from his laboratory at Sandoz in Switzerland when Dr. Albert Hoffman (1906-2008), the inventor of LSD, started to feel a little strange and began to realize what he had discovered. He wasn’t looking for a psychedelic, he was looking for an analeptic to stimulate the central nervous system, and dosed himself accidentally through his skin. But he came to appreciate it, and said years later: “I think that in human evolution it has never been as necessary to have this substance LSD. It is just a tool to turn us into what we are supposed to be.”

Lots of people listen to music while tripping, but I didn't usually do that – ordinarily my focus was on observing the world around me, usually nature but sometimes city life. Everything you see on acid is suffused not only with meaning but with surpassing beauty – indeed, the two properties are related, as Keats famously pointed out, because the beauty is so meaningful and the meaning is so beautiful. This might sound like gibberish to those of my readers who haven't tripped – but those who have will know just what I mean.<sup>23</sup> It was reassuring always to go back to the same place – it helped me understand that place better, and integrate its reality into my everyday life.

I tripped many dozens of times. I remember some great trips in New York and San Francisco, and in Cape Cod, and on Okinawa. In San Francisco in early acid days, I



would just go around the neighborhood, as described in the Chapter 18.C, looking at the plants that grew on my hillside (like wild fennel, left). Later, on Yorba Street and on 47th Avenue, I tripped in my back yard. Sometimes I went to Golden Gate Park, being sure I had enough money to come home in a taxi – I wouldn't want to drive on acid.

One time I did drive on acid – I was going to a wedding in Marin County where Les Wisner was the photographer, and I had a

Japanese friend of his in the car with me as a passenger. The acid came on earlier than I'd expected and I pulled over at the top of a hill on Highway 101 and made my passenger drive – it was not safe for me to continue. There is so much going on when you're tripping that you can't be sure of watching the road. (This is not the case with cannabis, which I have found perfectly safe for driving – maybe safer, as you pay closer attention.)

- I remember when I got to the wedding there was a pet monkey there – I spent a lot of the trip watching the monkey and the children and the adults and meditating on their similarities and connections. I can confidently report: acid telepathy works with monkeys too.

In New York in the 1970s I would sometimes trip with my brothers – I remember an epic trip with Adam at the Metropolitan Museum. Another time I came home to 112 East 70th Street from tripping, found my brothers just starting a trip, and joined them in a double-header. Another trip, when I came down to New York from Truro for a while, I

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<sup>23</sup> See note 20 above.

spent in Central Park near the Metropolitan Museum, looking at the great towers on Fifth Avenue.

- In the 1970s Ron Green found some acid that came in crystals – he had a small bottle and these tiny brown crystals clung to its inside walls by static electricity. We would fish them out one by one with toothpicks. That was great stuff.
- I turned Joel Solkoff onto acid at the same Feather Falls location where I had first tripped. He became a real fan.
- When I tripped in San Francisco I would usually end up at the water, either Ocean Beach or Aquatic Park. Many is the trip I have ended at these places, listening to a hippie play a drum as the sun appeared to sink slowly and spectacularly below the horizon. The memory of these experiences led me to provide in my will that my ashes are to be dropped into the Bay off Aquatic Park.

My acid use tapered off in the 1990s. I used to take a booster trip every year, then every couple of years, and then less often. Acid is now hard to find, but even if I had some I wouldn't use it – since stopping cannabis in 2005 I find I don't want to take *any* drugs anymore. There is a saying: when you get the message, hang up the phone.

Here's an e-mail from 2004, describing my last acid trip.

I took some acid on Saturday, my first time in several years. I used to take a refresher course every year – but it has been probably about five years since my last trip. It takes several days – a day to prepare the environment – there should be no disorder – a day for the trip and then a couple of days to recover – I have slept more than half of each of the two subsequent days and am still pretty tired. This always happens and has to be allowed for, which is one reason I have done it so infrequently in past years – who has four uninterrupted days in a row?

I should not have worried, though – it was the same beautiful, magnificent and instructive journey as before. The only acid I had was very old, so this trip was a bit more muted than others, but it was acid all right, and I'm very glad to have revisited that place. I will find some fresher stuff and not let it go that long again.

I tripped in my back yard, which it being July by the Ocean in San Francisco was pretty cold anyway, and as you remember an acid trip is always cold, you can never get warm even wearing a coat, your hands shake, it is very tiring and ideally there should be some experienced acidhead around to make hot tea for you, but this time there wasn't.

I spent a lot of time with one particular flower, watching the blossom prepare to open and then open and meditating on its lessons – this took a couple of hours, but what was my hurry? I kept hearing Louis Armstrong in my head, the rare cut of "I Can't Give You Anything But Love." When I came down I went back inside the house and made some hot tea and listened to Coleman Hawkins and Lester Young. Even

played by Louis Armstrong, a trumpet is still a trumpet, and when a person's psychic nerves are all wiggly and exposed coming down from acid a tenor or even better a baritone saxophone is more what's needed, not a trumpet however superb. Coleman Hawkins was perfect for the occasion. So that's my adventure, and I remain as grateful and devoted an acidhead as I ever was.

I look back on all my acid experiences as just about uniformly positive. I did have one uncomfortable trip in 1972, when I was depressed and probably shouldn't have been tripping anyway, but other than that there was never a problem, and certainly none of the terrifying "bad trips" people complained about. Probably this is because I knew what acid was about and knew what I was doing – I think most of those bad trips were cases where people either didn't know what they were getting into or what was happening to them, or were so mentally unstable that a trip was ill-advised anyway.

I learned a tremendous amount from LSD, and recommend it to anyone suitably prepared – have someone guide you along the first time or two if you can. Remember set (what you bring to it) and setting (your tripping environment) – don't drop acid and go to a disco or even a rave. Acid is not entertainment – it is a sacrament.<sup>24</sup>

This is from an e-mail in the mid-2000s:

As an elitist myself, I want to agree with you (although of course I know better) that it is more convenient for a few at the top to be liberated and the rest to serve out their lives as drones. To Tim[ Leary]'s credit, he never shared that view. Democratizing LSD was a great contribution. Liberation available to everyone, even though not many will achieve it. "For many are called, but few are chosen." Matthew 2:14.

Tim tried hard to prevent damage to unprepared trippers, not by restricting access to acid but by preparing people. Set and setting were his concepts; so too I think were the psychedelic rules which included not dosing unsuspecting

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<sup>24</sup> Historically there were two views about this. The idea that LSD is a sacrament, that it should be taken in quiet, contemplative settings, and the Eastern-religious tinge to the acid experience, are characteristic of the psychedelic lineage of Timothy Leary, influenced strongly by his colleague Richard Alpert (who became Ram Dass). As explained elsewhere, I am of the Leary lineage – that was the approach of the people who first turned me on, I imprinted Ram Dass' book on my first trip, and Leary himself gave me my psychedelic permission. But there is another psychedelic lineage, that of Ken Kesey (1935-2001), he of the Merry Pranksters, the Grateful Dead, and the Day-Glo bus, for whom a wild light show acid test with super-loud rock music was just the place to take acid, handed out promiscuously in vats of spiked Kool-Aid. In *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* (1968), his definitive and hugely entertaining history of the Kesey phenomenon, Tom Wolfe contrasts the wild Day-Glo Keseyites with the quiet Indian-print-bedsread-on-the-wall Learyites.

people. Many who had bad trips were unaware what they were getting, or getting into; others were so fragile or damaged before tripping that they should not have tried the stuff. But it was better to have acid available to the masses than not – all those liberated carpenters owe it to Tim. A “mass movement under that banner,” as you put it, was great for America and Europe. I only wish it had lasted longer.

When Richard Nixon thinks you are the most dangerous man in America, it is hard to see how you could stay out of trouble, short of Galileo-style recanting. It was Tim’s mission, after his own experiences, to make this experience available to everyone. He was a pioneer and to some extent a martyr – by his stripes we are healed. Isaiah 53:5.

### G. Cocaine, opiates and other delicacies

I have tried cocaine from time to time and have a lot of trouble understanding what the attraction is. I find it invigorating and refreshing, but the sensation is fleeting and isn’t all that interesting even when it’s happening. Things look clearer, as if I had just cleaned my glasses and they were *really, really* clean. But so what? I can’t quite see why people find this high so compelling that they wreck their lives and fortunes to keep it going. Maybe all those years of amphetamines spoiled me for cocaine. If so that’s a good thing. I had a tiny vial of cocaine once and never finished it – it may still be around somewhere after 25 years.



I never got enough opium to really count (a few tokes through a straw when a drop was burning). I have had opiated hashish, though, and taken codeine, which is an opiate, and I liked it a lot, especially the intense dreams. I would have tried more opium if I had found any, but since stopping cannabis I no longer like codeine. Indeed during my illness (November 2005 – February 2006) I refused to take it even though I had a debilitating cough. I did finally take some when the cough got too exhausting to bear – codeine is wonderful for coughs – but didn’t like the mental effect and used it only when there was absolutely nothing else I could do for relief and getting relief was imperative. This is a different reaction from what I felt in 1980 or so, when I had all four wisdom teeth out in one day and spent the next four days floating on codeine. Then I loved not only dreaming but being able to float in and out of a dream, resuming it after a break. These were very pleasant days, but they ended when I discovered the constipating effect of opiates, and I will draw a curtain over what I had to do to pass the cannonball which had been accumulating in my gut.

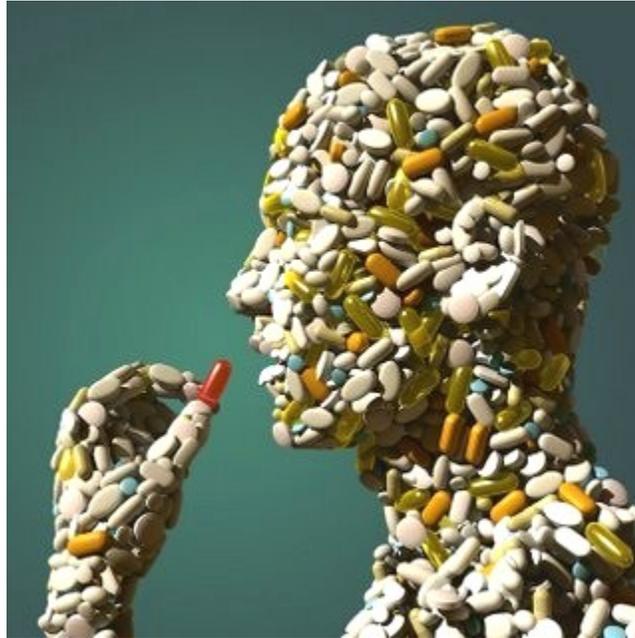
I did some PCP a few times at the Baker Hotel around 1977. This came dusted on a joint, and Jeff Nevelow's slave Justin scored it for me on Polk Street. It was really exciting and hugely visual, but very scary. It felt like the whole universe was draining away like bath water. I tried reminding myself, psychedelic style, that this was just a drug, but under the influence of PCP this is not convincing and the experience felt terrifyingly real. Terrifying, but so exciting I tried it a few more times.

- I did some sodium pentothal too, also on joints. I would try any drug once.
- I tried some ketamine on Cape Cod around 1988, but four of us had to share the dose and it was too little to get me off.
- I tried DMT several times, but despite my best efforts I never got the visions of trolls and caverns described by Terence McKenna. Both DMT and PCP left me with a headache afterwards.
- It's probably a good thing I never found any heroin or crack. I might have been a goner.
- I can't stand nitrous oxide – its the only psychoactive drug I never liked. It doesn't do anything for pain (for me anyway) and it makes me ill and feels like an electric shock and the disgusting smell of the stuff lingers in my beard. They would give me all I wanted at my dentist's office, which is all staffed by Russian emigrés who understand from their vodka days how nice it is to get high, but I don't want any.

In this drug review I didn't mention caffeine because it has never been important to me. With a pocket full of amphetamines, who needs caffeine? Although there were a few times when I drank coffee on a regular basis – working in offices where free coffee was always available, for example, or hanging out in Dairyland in Provincetown (see Chapter 25) – I was never one of those people who needed a morning jolt of coffee to face the day. After I started taking homeopathic remedies in the 1990s, I never drank coffee at all, because coffee (although not caffeine) antidotes them. In recent year, though, I have begun using a sweet fizzy lemony “energy drink” called Sugar Free Rock Star – full of caffeine and taurine and other jump-starters – when I really need a fire lit under me to face some dreary task. I guess this counts as drug use, but it is pretty mild by the standards of what I was used to.



That's all the drugs I can remember!<sup>25</sup> I take sleeping pills every now and then, particularly when I'm traveling over multiple time zones – I suppose they count as psychoactive but I don't think of them that way, or take them for mood or recreation. I mention other prescription drugs and homeopathic remedies briefly in Chapter 34.



**Tailpiece: Unattributed, from the Internet<sup>26</sup>**

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<sup>25</sup> Maybe if I hadn't taken so many drugs, I could remember more. Just kidding.

<sup>26</sup> Found at <http://neuroethicscanada.wordpress.com/2009/12/>.

**Document 17-1: California Compassionate Use Act of 1996**

SECTION 1. Section 11362.5 is added to the Health and Safety Code, to read:

11362.5. (a) This section shall be known and may be cited as the Compassionate Use Act of 1996.

(b)(1) The people of the State of California hereby find and declare that the purposes of the Compassionate Use Act of 1996 are as follows:

(A) To ensure that seriously ill Californians have the right to obtain and use marijuana for medical purposes where that medical use is deemed appropriate and has been recommended by a physician who has determined that the person's health would benefit from the use of marijuana in the treatment of cancer, anorexia, AIDS, chronic pain, spasticity, glaucoma, arthritis, migraine, or any other illness for which marijuana provides relief.

(B) To ensure that patients and their primary caregivers who obtain and use marijuana for medical purposes upon the recommendation of a physician are not subject to criminal prosecution or sanction.

(C) To encourage the federal and state governments to implement a plan to provide for the safe and affordable distribution of marijuana to all patients in medical need of marijuana.

(2) Nothing in this section shall be construed to supersede legislation prohibiting persons from engaging in conduct that endangers others, nor to condone the diversion of marijuana for nonmedical purposes.

(c) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, no physician in this state shall be punished, or denied any right or privilege, for having recommended marijuana to a patient for medical purposes.

(d) Section 11357, relating to the possession of marijuana, and Section 11358, relating to the cultivation of marijuana, shall not apply to a patient, or to a patient's primary caregiver, who possesses or cultivates marijuana for the personal medical purposes of the patient upon the written or oral recommendation or approval of a physician.

(e) For the purposes of this section, "primary caregiver" means the individual designated by the person exempted under this section who has consistently assumed responsibility for the housing, health, or safety of that person.

SECTION 2. If any provision of this measure or the application thereof to any person or circumstance is held invalid, that invalidity shall not affect other provisions or applications of the measure that can be given effect without the invalid provision or application, and to this end the provisions of this measure are severable.

**Document 17-2: Compassionate Use Act letter**



EUGENE SCHOENFELD, M.D.

1417A Bridgeway, Suite 8

P.O. Box 866

Sausalito, CA 94966

Telephone: (415) 331-6832

Fax: (415) 331-9513

December 4, 2000

Re: David Phillips, born 9/15/44  
2331 47th Avenue  
San Francisco, CA 94116

To Whom It May Concern:

I have evaluated Mr. David Phillips and recommend that he use marijuana. This recommendation is valid until June 5, 2001.

Sincerely,

Eugene Schoenfeld, M.D.  
Medical License C-24333

2331 - 47th Avenue  
San Francisco 94116 USA  
December 14, 1998

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(415) 753-6190; fax (415) 753-1950  
*phillipd@fbm.com*

Dear Peter,

Well, as you will no doubt have figured out, the happy experience of the Day After Thanksgiving was another acid trip. It has been three years.<sup>1</sup> I spent the holiday weekend up at Ron Green's place in Lower Lake, dropped on Friday morning, and then slept most of Saturday. Very demanding physically. But so much worth it!

Every trip has a theme, and this one was the aphorism "Don't identify with a restricted viewpoint." That sums up all the law and the prophets from a Buddhist perspective, and the more I meditated, on Ron's deck looking out at the trees, the more my meditations seemed to come back to that. One great thing about LSD is that understandings which take immense effort to hold onto just for a little while (like trying to understand Relativity) are easy and natural and effortless and persistent. The futility of identifying with any of the preferences and apparent structures of this life is easy to talk about but not so easy actually to *grok*, if you know the word; but while tripping, it is as easy as knowing how the stairs work.<sup>2</sup> And some of that insight remains, and the memory of the easy understanding makes it more accessible back on the ground. Another example: Buddhism talks of the sorrow of rebirth, the weariness of having to go through all that again, the longing for liberation. But actually to *feel* those things, rather than just know them from lectures by lamas, is an ecstatic experience. Ecstatic because it requires (as Buddhism does) an *experienced* redefinition of one's own supposed identity and a suspension of identification with one's own ego. All available in a bottle.

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<sup>1</sup> Forgive me, father, for I have sinned -- it has been three years since my last acid trip.

<sup>2</sup> Easier, actually -- while tripping it is well to pay close attention to how the stairs work..